

the VA was \$1.1 billion in the red. That was under a House Leadership that was Republican, and that left short many of the needs of our veterans.

It was when the Democrats in January took over that we pushed this largest single appropriations bill in the history of the VA to address all of those unmet needs, and I just asked my colleagues across the aisle to work with us. No one is complaining here today about the content of that bill or the process that brought it to this floor.

Many of the ideas in that bill are part and parcel of what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would hope for. We just need to work together today to get this bill to the floor, get it done, and get it to the President for his signature.

COUPLING APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

(Mr. GOODLATTE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose the majority's plan to combine two unrelated appropriations bills, the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services and Department of Education and the funding for Veterans and Military Construction.

I oppose this combined approach because, in doing so, the Democrat majority is using political maneuvering to avoid tough spending choices in the controversial Labor-HHS and Education bill.

I hope we all agree that we need to keep our commitment to veterans by supporting veterans benefits and military construction provisions. But the majority should not use the popularity of veterans funding to build a legislative Christmas tree by including labor and health spending at \$10 billion above the President's request.

No one is fooled by this craven manipulation of benefits for our Nation's veterans. Let's debate these bills individually, rather than holding funding for veterans military care and military facilities hostage with a controversial bill.

MAKING HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN OUR VETERAN CARE

(Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Madam Speaker, veterans are a number one issue in the State of Kansas. We found it just appalling how shameful the lack of funding for our veterans had become.

When I came to this Congress, I can't tell you how pleased I was that we put \$5.2 billion of emergency spending into our veterans funding, and a lot of that came right into the good hospitals of Kansas. That \$5.2 billion of emergency funding was also called "pork." How somebody could call funding our veterans "pork" was just beyond me.

Today, we are making a historic investment in our veteran care. I am hoping that we can come together across the aisle in a bipartisan manner and stand up for our veterans and insist that our President sign this bill and start to take care of our veterans as they should have been.

CONCERN OVER DELAY IN FUNDING FOR VETERANS

(Mr. KLINE of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in asking the leadership of this House to bring the Military Construction and VA funding bill to the floor for a stand-alone vote.

Earlier this year, many of us felt the pain when a young marine in my district committed suicide after honorably serving in Iraq after he visited two VA hospitals. We recognize, as a body here, that we need to provide the funding for our VA. We passed the bill in this House, 409-2. This is a bill with bipartisan support.

We have heard rhetoric from the other side of the floor that says this is so important that we should pass this legislation no matter what pork-laden legislation it's tied to. That's what is the trouble here, my colleagues, is that the leadership of this House has taken a cynical action to attach an important bill that has strong bipartisan support to a piece of legislation they know that many of us did not support and the President has promised a veto.

I ask the leadership to reach out, as one of my colleagues said, and work in a bipartisan way, which is easily done by separating this legislation. Let's get it done today.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE OVERSEAS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, war has changed, but our commitment to the brave men and women who serve overseas remains the same. This Democratic Congress today is passing a veterans bill prioritizing veterans by fully funding the Veterans Administration. We recognize the changing needs of our new veterans by allocating funding to address conditions like PTSD, and we supported a pay raise for military families that this President, who has no trouble sending our troops and billions of dollars into Iraq, called unnecessary.

Now, today, we are going to finally pass this Veterans appropriations bill. We are going to keep the promise we made to service men and women when they volunteered to serve our Nation overseas by taking care of them when they come home. This is the largest veterans increase for health care in

history. This is the commitment of the Democratic prompt of the Democratic Congress, and we are going to make sure it happens today, regardless of what the President decides to do, if he vetoes it or not.

We will just come back again and again and again regardless of his veto. We are tired of the fact that this President gets up and says that he supports these initiatives but then vetoes them.

□ 1045

TRICK OR TREATING IN CONGRESS

(Mrs. BACHMANN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, Halloween was last week, but trick or treating may be a part of the House of Representatives this week if the Democrats have their way on the veterans funding bill.

It was over 140 days ago that this Congress passed a veterans funding bill. It was a good bill. So why hasn't this bill made its way to the President's desk? The President has said he will sign this bill. Our veterans need this funding. They deserve this funding that the bill would provide.

Instead, the Democrats are preempting Thanksgiving holiday by serving up a turkey of a funding bill, a turkey that is filled with pork-based stuffing.

The business of national defense and the business of taking care of the very real needs of our veterans is just too important just to satisfy the urge to spend extra money that we just don't have in order to fund pet projects.

I want to say thank you to America's veterans, to those veterans who go to our veterans health care center in St. Cloud, Minnesota. I want to thank you for what you have done, for your sacrifice for this country.

Let's pass this bill.

MOMENT OF SILENCE HONORING THE SACRIFICE OF SERGEANT LOUIS GRIESE

(Mr. KAGEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, Louis Grieser served with honor, with courage and skill; and last week on October 31, he lost his life while serving his third tour of duty in Iraq.

Please join me in honoring his memory. He leaves behind a wife, Stephany, and 4-month-old daughter, Skylar.

Sergeant Louis Grieser of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, was killed as a result of wounds incurred from a roadside bomb. His family believes in service to one's Nation. A true believer in service, Sergeant Grieser followed in the footsteps of his father who fought in the Korean War.

Sergeant Grieser's mother, Susan Frihart, described her son, saying, "He

was very proud to be a soldier. He didn't want to leave his newborn baby, but he left because that was his duty."

Every Member of Congress and every American owes a debt of gratitude to Louis Griese and his family for his dedicated and honorable service. Sergeant Griese made the ultimate sacrifice, and his service shall not be forgotten.

I ask all of you to join me in a moment of silence on his behalf.

DR. OSCAR ELIAS BISCET

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, yesterday the President of the United States, President Bush, honored eight outstanding individuals with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. One of those individuals was Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, a political prisoner in Cuba.

Dr. Biscet is a 46-year-old physician and peaceful advocate of freedom and democracy. Dr. Biscet is an honest and decent man of principle who cites Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi and the Dalai Lama as his role models. He has dedicated his entire life to defending human rights and advancing the cause of democracy in Cuba.

And for that, Madam Speaker, in 2003 Dr. Biscet was sentenced to 25 years in prison and today sits in solitary confinement in a totally darkened 3-foot by 6-foot cell commonly known there as "The Tomb."

Dr. Biscet and hundreds of other individuals just like him keep the hope for democracy alive for the Cuban people. He's a true patriot, Madam Speaker. He's a patriot for the Cuban people, a true hero and an example for everyone who loves freedom.

I want to thank President Bush for once again standing with the Cuban people and making a strong statement for freedom.

I am in awe of Dr. Biscet's bravery, and I look forward to the day that he can walk in freedom along with his people in his honor.

HONORING THOSE VETERANS WHO PROTECTED US

(Mr. BOUSTANY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, today my colleagues will enumerate the importance of funding bills that this Congress has yet to pass. One of these bills, the veterans appropriations bill, is particularly important, and the lack of progress for political purposes is simply atrocious.

This past weekend, I met with veterans from Louisiana who had come to visit the beautiful World War II Memorial. One man had stormed Omaha Beach on D-Day. Another was a mem-

ber of the famed Buffalo Soldiers, an original member of the famed Buffalo Soldiers. These men are heroes.

I heard firsthand their needs, the increased attention that's needed for mental health purposes and other better VA services.

Madam Speaker, as we approach Veterans Day, let us in Congress demonstrate our appreciation. Let us pass a veterans appropriations bill as promised without unrelated pork-laden spending bills attached. Let us pass it to honor those who have protected us so bravely and for those who continue to serve valiantly to protect us today.

MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS

(Mrs. SCHMIDT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to protest the majority's decision to tie the funding of our veterans to the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriation bill.

The facts of this case are simple. The House had passed a bill on June 15, followed by the Senate on September 6, that supports our veterans and the pay raises and the funding that they need. The differences in these bills are miniscule. The Senate has appointed their conferees. Our House has yet to do the same. What's the hold-up? Politics. Rather than bringing the MilCon-VA conference report to the floor as a stand-alone measure, a measure that will be supported by both parties, supported by the President and signed into law, the other side has decided to tie it to a controversial bill that the President has said time and time again he will veto.

Madam Speaker, our veterans have risked their lives for us without regard to political affiliation. We have to stop the politics. We have to work for our veterans.

I ask that we use this time in a bipartisan fashion and pass the MilCon-VA bill as a stand-alone bill.

MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, we celebrate Veterans Day on November 11. Every day in this country should be Veterans Day, that is, we should highlight veterans and thank them for their service to our country.

Yet, it's been over 140 days since the House passed the MilCon-VA appropriations bill and 8 weeks since the Senate passed it. The bill has strong bipartisan support and the President is ready to sign it. Yet Democrats have delayed bringing this bill to the floor.

The Democrats finally announced they're bringing it to the floor this week, but instead of voting on a stand-alone bill which would ensure quick

passage and provide funding for our troops and veterans, they're using it as a political tool by attaching it to the Labor-HHS bill.

The American people hate this kind of political posturing. They know that when bills are combined like that, that it's a political and cynical ploy. That's the only way the Democrats can get their pork-barrel spending passed is by attaching it to the military bill.

By using it as a political tool instead of an urgent spending priority, the Democratic leadership illustrates where their priorities are, and they aren't with our troops and veterans.

SUPPORTING OUR AMERICAN HEROES

(Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of our American heroes, the men and women who have served this great Nation, our veterans.

On June 15, the House passed the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations and did not appoint conferees. The Senate passed the same in September, on September 6, over 60 days ago; and they immediately appointed conferees.

This tactic of holding veterans funding hostage creates a dangerous precedent. The House is now faced with unrelated policies being forced into this bill.

Veterans funding is not a means of playing politics. Using our veterans and funding our next year's election is unconscionable.

Fund the veterans, and let's move on to the next piece of legislation. Our focus should be on keeping our promises to our veterans and those who have served so bravely.

Madam Speaker, separate these bills.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

(Mr. LAMBORN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAMBORN. Madam Speaker, almost 5 months ago the House passed the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. Eight weeks ago it passed the Senate.

I'm a member of both the Armed Services Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee; and I, like most Members of Congress, voted for the bill. It will provide funding to ensure our veterans receive their benefits in a timely fashion and will provide our troops with the resources necessary to keep America safe.

However, the Democrat leadership has failed to get this bill to the President's desk despite tremendous bipartisan support. It is sad that they are choosing to abuse their leadership position by playing politics with the needs